



**By Carolyn Lee**

***The Imperial Republican***

Sixteen Champion Post Office patrons heard what they had expected at a meeting Tuesday concerning future hours at the post office.

Kelly Lacey, Acting Manager of Post Office Operations for Western Nebraska from McCook, told those present at the meeting in Champion that the post office will be open from 8 a.m. to 12 noon Monday through Friday and from 8-8:30 a.m. on Saturday.

Actually, those are the hours the Postal Service set after an incident in which postal clerk Marjie Buls was allegedly attacked last year. Prior to that time the post office was open eight hours a day during the week.

The Postal Service is reducing hours and cutting services around the country in an effort to stem the continuing deficit within the Postal Service.

Lacey said the post offices are evaluated on their workload. She said village post offices have gone from 1.28 billion customer retail visits in 2005 to .93 billion in 2011, a 27 percent drop in service.

Many of those present questioned the half-hour window time at the Champion Post Office on Saturday morning, which has been the most it's been open recently.

One of those present questioned why the post office could only be open for 30 minutes. Lacey replied that, "It's always been that way. It's black and white. We're not going to extend window hours."

It was noted that a postal employee will be working at least two hours on Saturday, preparing the mail for delivery.

The McCook postmaster also pointed out that if a person doesn't make the 8-8:30 a.m. window at the Champion Post Office on Saturdays, they can always drop mail under 13 ounces with proper postage in the blue box outside the post office, and it will be collected on Saturdays.

Lacey said the Postal Service is mandated to provide service six days per week. She added that Champion patrons probably won't see afternoon hours any day of the week. "You have to have a person to break down the mail for rural carriers and get them on their route on time," and that's in the morning.

A number of questions were asked concerning not the present hours at the Champion Post Office, but mail service on Saturdays in the fall. The Postal Service is considering doing away with city and rural delivery of mail in August, but continuing post office box and window service.

Lacey said, "We're trying everything we can to be cost efficient and self sufficient." She noted that change is hard.

She said from now on, every post office in the nation will be evaluated every year concerning its office workload.